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PROGRAM Evening Exchange

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SUBJECT John Stockwell Interview/Angola

KOJO NNANDI: ...Six years ago, according to one report, Jonas Savimbi couldn't get an appointment with an Assistant Secretary of State. So, who is Jonas Savimbi and why are we suddenly showering him with attention, and maybe with money? Well, that's a long story. In tonight's program we'll attempt to tell as much of that story as possible, beginning with Mr. Savimbi's history, and continuing in a second segment with a discussion of Mr. Savimbi's present and his future.

For openers, we will say three things. First, that Jonas Savimbi is head of UNITA, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola. Second, that the White House and the Congress are both considering financial aid for UNITA. And third, that opponents and proponents of those proposals say the measures would give new meaning to the term constructive engagement with South Africa, Mr. Savimbi's main backer.

Joining me for the first segment on the background to the U.S. relationship with Jonas Savimbi and UNITA is John Stockwell. He is former chief of the CIA's Angola task force, also author of the international bestseller In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story, a book in which he describes his experiences in the CIA's Angola operation. This is the book.

Angola is a Southwest African territory that was dominated and colonized by the Portugese in the latter part of the 15th Century. The Portugese held on to it until the mid-1970s, when after a revolution in Portugal the stage was set for the independence of the Portugese colonies in Southern Africa, Mozambique and Angola.

In the case of Angola, there were three major liberation

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movements at the time: MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA. They were formed into a provisional government to await and prepare for elections in Angola which were scheduled for November 11th of 1975. However, fighting broke out, and it ended up with the MPLA in control of Luanda, the FNLA driven to the North and to bases in Zaire, and UNITA going back to the place where it started its liberation movement, in the South, in the bush.

Enter John Stockwell. At that time, just recently returned from Vietnam, made the chief of the Angola task force.

And in a way, the CIA's involvement in Angola, according to you, began with a grunt from Dr. Henry Kissinger, who was Secretary of State at the time. Can you explain that?

JOHN STOCKWELL: The Kissinger grunt actually occurred in November, later on, when he -- you know, our first program there, our first policy was no-win. It was to escalate the fighting and then see what happened at the time of independence, which would go from July, which would be in November. By November, our allies, such as Savimbi and the FNLA, despite our massive aid, were being soundly thumped. And Henry Kissinger asked us to come up with an options paper on what we could do to win, and the answer was nothing, really.

But we wrote an options paper, and he was busy running off to China. You know, he notoriously didn't have much interest in anything south of Boston, much less south of the equator. We had trouble getting him to read this options paper.

Now mind you, while we're doing all of this, people are dying in Angola. But finally we had a meeting on Tuesday, after he had gone off to China, with the subcommittee of the National Security Council to discuss his decision: Do go in with \$100 million or 60 million, or whatever? And Jim Potts, the Africa Division chief, who's now working with the Heritage Foundation, by the way, in the reselling of Savimbi, retired from the CIA, he asked Senior Ambassador Ed Mulcahy, "What did Henry decide?"

And Mulcahy tamped his pipe for a while and said, "He didn't really decide anything."

And Potts said, "Well, you know."

And Mulcahy said, "Well, I made him read the paper. I stopped him in the hallway and I said, 'Henry, you're not getting on that airplane until you read this paper.' And so he read it and he grunted, and went off to China."

And so Jim Potts, the CIA GS-18, like the three-star general, who was my boss in running this thing, looking very

serious in this room full of three-star generals, literally, and senior ambassadors, making decisions that are going to kill people, you know, in Angola, he finally said, "Well, was it a positive-sounding grunt or was it a negative-sounding grunt?"

And Mulcahy thought a while and said, "Well, it was just a grunt. I mean he just grunted."

And so I sat there and listened to these people practicing grunts, with a high voice and a low voice. And then Hal Haloran (?) from the White House said, "How does one grunt with a German accent?" And everybody laughed.

And then Jim Potts said, "Well, gentlemen, you know, we have to make a decision. Do we put in American advisers? Do we put in more mercenaries, or what?" And then finally he said, "Ed, you're going to have to make a decision. You're Henry's man."

And so Mulcahy said, "Well, he just decided not to put American advisers or observers into the Sinai. And Angola's not nearly as important as the Middle East. So we'd better not."

And with that great rational process, we were making decisions, as I say, that were getting people killed in Angola.

NNANDI: While we did eventually decide to give some assistance, it should be pointed out that Mr. Savimbi started out with the FNLA and Holden Roberto. He split with Mr. Roberto in 1964 and went down to form UNITA, I think around 1967.

The MPLA was the group that had Soviet support all along and some support from several other countries. The UNITA organization did get some support from China, from North Korea, and a few other countries. The FNLA got much of its support from Zaire. Mr. Roberto was President Mobutu of Zaire's brother-in-law, in addition to being a close political ally. And that was the rationale on which the U.S. decided to throw in its lot with FNLA and UNITA, even though they were not together.

How much did we put in, and in what way?

STOCKWELL: Thirty-one-point-seven million dollars aid money, arms, materiel, lots of tons of arms flown from the U.S. to Kinshasa and translated into Angola. I went in at the outset of the program, since I was the chief, to sort of assess who we would be working with. I went in...

NNANDI: But you even had to try to do that strategically, because that wasn't something that was easy for you to do. You went in. You met with Mr. Roberto. You met with Mr. Savimbi. And you were impressed with Mr. Savimbi. Why?

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STOCKWELL: He had two qualities that were very appealing at that time. And mind you, he has some colossal faults, as well. One is he was not a cocktail party cowboy. He was in the bush. He'd been in the bush for years, leading the guerrilla activities himself.

If you're in CIA paramilitary activities, to find someone who really wants to go in the jungle and fight, as opposed to sitting out, spending your money, there are not too many Savimbis, in that sense.

He also had a quality of simple honesty. If he told you there were 300 soldiers in a given camp, and you went and counted 289, you would find that 11 had gone on patrol that morning. As compared to Holden Roberto, who told me he had 30,000 troops in the North, and I went in and I couldn't count 80. This was another appealing quality.

He is also, Savimbi, the ultimate horror, a chameleon. He has worked with everybody in the world and changed his ideology about as often as he changes uniforms. He has taken help from the CIA and Communist China and the North Koreans. He has fought on the side of the MPLA, the FNLA, SWAPO, the Katangese gendarmes. He's also -- and the Portugese. He's fought against all of those same factions on occasion.

And then, eventually, since we left in 1976 -- no, while we were there, in 1975, he made the ultimate blunder for a person in his position, which is he turned to South Africa for help.

NNANDI: And at that point, what was the nature of the CIA's involvement with Mr. Savimbi?

STOCKWELL: We actually encouraged South Africa to come in and work with him. We're talking now about the Fall of 1975. We have a covert action going. We're lying about it to everybody in the world, including the Senate. And we can talk about that later, perjury. The CIA Director deliberately misinforming the oversight committees to distract them from such things as: Are you involved with South Africa? "No, we're staying well away from South Africa," he said, when we were deeply involved...

NNANDI: We're talking about William Colby, who was then Director of the CIA in the Ford Administration.

STOCKWELL: That's right.

NNANDI: Let's pursue that for a second. He was asked by the Senate Intelligence Committee exactly what's going on. He lied?

STOCKWELL: He lied. He lied, specific lies, in 36

formal briefings. And I hasten to note that lying to Senate oversight committees is perjury. That's a felony. And he lied in these briefings.

When I left the government I went to them and I gave them chapter and verse. I gave them volumes of notes taken from my memory, the cable numbers, the dates, the details. I told them where in the CIA these cables were locked up. I gave them the combinations to the safes so they could go and choose the documents that would prove the perjury, so they could indict Mr. Colby and the people that had conspired with him, which would include myself, I presume, and Henry Kissinger, for perjury. For political reasons, they couldn't see themselves doing it.

Things like: Are you involved with South Africa? That's a policy matter, but also there was a law against military involvement with South Africa. We were deeply involved with them.

NNANDI: How?

STOCKWELL: We were so closely involved in the fighting in Angola that we would have our C-141s, the big cargo planes, fly from the States and land in Kinshasa after midnight, meeting two of the smaller C-130s, L-100s from the South African Air Force, and transload our arms directly onto their planes, with all three planes leaving Kinshasa in the dark of night so no one could notice, with them taking the arms into Servoporto (?), Savimbi's part of Angola, to act as our logistical officers and distribute to UNITA, to Savimbi.

NNANDI: It is important at that point to understand the purpose of our policy. Here are three liberation movements, essentially, jockeying for position as the elections near. The Soviet Union is giving assistance to MPLA. We decide to come in on the other side. Did we see the other side winning?

STOCKWELL: No. We had a no-win policy.

But mind you, the Soviet Union had disengaged from the MPLA in 1974. They were disappointed with their policies. The Soviet Union made its decision, and announced it through Tass, to support the MPLA after we started giving funds to Holden Roberto, during the Summer of 1974 in Kinshasa.

NNANDI: Okay. So that there was a non-win policy. We're giving funds to both the FNLA and UNITA.

There is also a question as to when the Cuban involvement in Angola began, how it began, and when it escalated. Could you clarify that, in the context of the CIA activities?

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STOCKWELL: Sure. I have in the back of my book the best chronology that we have.

In January of 1975, the Alvora (?) accord. The leaders of the three movements met with the Portugese and agreed on peaceful competition, for elections to decide who would inherit the country.

On the 26th of January, the CIA peeled out its first \$300,000 and gave it to Holden Roberto and told him to put his forces into Northern Angola. And they did and they killed some MPLA, and there no longer could be a peaceful solution. So we sabotaged the Alvora accord.

NNANDI: So that was what led to the MPLA's striking back and kicking the FNLA and UNITA out of the capital of Luanda.

STOCKWELL: The MPLA proceeded to get arms from Congo Brazzaville. We proceeded to put arms in from Kinshasa. They had a Cuban adviser or two, was the earliest count, at the time we were putting in Zairian advisers.

In the summer, by July of '75, they had, by the CIA's count, 260 Cuban advisers. Although Cuba has denied that. And who would really know the exact truth? And we certainly had a like number of Zairian paracommandos and [unintelligible] people going in.

NNANDI: So you're saying that the FNLA, supported by the CIA, struck the first blow that shattered the Alvora accord.

STOCKWELL: Absolutely.

NNANDI: Okay. Then...

STOCKWELL: They caught a bunch of peaceful, unarmed political cadres of the MPLA and killed them, killed about 45 people. And at that point it was cast in blood.

NNANDI: So the three movements are now separated again, and we're supporting the two. And in the Southern part of the country, we should mention that that is where the Cabinda province, one of the nine provinces in Angola, is located. Cabinda is where Gulf Oil has most of its holdings. And that is very important to the economy of Angola.

STOCKWELL: Cabinda is the exclave, actually north. It's actually separated by some water.

NNANDI: Closer to Zaire.

STOCKWELL: Closer to Zaire. And that's where the oil

is. Although there's now a big store of oil offshore. So the stakes have actually gone up right in the last year, so to speak. It's Gulf Oil pumping that oil for -- you know, the irony is, after we were defeated in February and withdrew, in February of '76, Gulf went back in. We had forced them to withdraw. Gulf went back in, and immediately their installations were guarded by Cuban soldiers to protect them from CIA mercenaries who were still mucking around in Northern Angola.

NNANDI: Interesting.

STOCKWELL: It's more interesting than just that. They're still in there today, Gulf, pumping, still protected by Cuban soldiers. They've been attacked in the last year by South African mercenaries. And Jonas Savimbi's now been reported on television as promising that he will launch guerrilla attacks against Gulf Oil. And at the time -- the Gulf Oil installations. And at the time he is promising to blow up our company's oil installations, our government is considering giving him aid to help his terrorist activity.

Someone explain this to me, please.

NNANDI: Well, it might be even more complicated than that. There are, as you know, people in this country who say that Gulf is betraying the interests of the United States and that anything Mr. Savimbi does to its holdings in Angola, it deserves.

At the same time, there's a now off-again, on-again negotiation process, including the government of Angola and the government of the United States. So they have at least been talking about the situation in Southern Africa in general, and Namibia and Angola in particular.

But back to the South of Angola. The year is 1975. And you say Mr. Savimbi committed this blunder by turning to South Africa for help in Mr. Savimbi's behalf.

I must say that he would say, "Well, I didn't have any place else to turn."

STOCKWELL: Well, at that time he was getting help from us and he had his own soldiers. He had as much as anyone else did.

That's one of those mistakes, though, that it's fatal. Whatever rational, you know, you've set yourself in history as the black liberation leader who turned to Pieter Botha for help, to South Africa for help.

NNANDI: But at first it didn't seem that way. Tell us,

if you will, what happened when the South Africans first started assisting UNITA.

STOCKWELL: The first few days when they came in, in October of '75, with their armored cars and their logistics and their air support, they swept very quickly across the southern part of Angola, very fast. Mind you, this area was not defended by any serious military force. There was this FAPLA (?), this MPLA fighting force, and perhaps a few Cuban advisers looking at the terrain. But they were not rushing through any serious military units. But they went very quickly across the southern part of Angola, and eventually got up to within 70 miles of Luanda before the FAPLA got itself organized and, with the Cubans backing it up, stopped the South Africans and turned them back.

NNANDI: At the same time, FNLA was pushing from the North. They also got turned back.

STOCKWELL: That's right.

NNANDI: And that is the process by which the MPLA, with Luanda as its center, began to establish a stronghold as the government of Angola.

STOCKWELL: That's right. Bheiy inherited the capital, established the government. It was recognized by most, eventually by most countries in the world, except the United States and South Africa. They have gradually, despite incredible handicaps for a newly independent country, they've gradually organized and expanded their efforts, until recently, last September, they were attacking Savimbi down on the Lomba (?) River, way down in the Southeast corner of the country. He was saved from defeat by direct intervention of the South African army. If they had not come in, he would have been pushed out of Angola altogether.

NNANDI: Between 1975 and 1985, was the CIA involved with Mr. Savimbi at all, as far as you know?

STOCKWELL: The Clark Amendment had been passed prohibiting such involvement. Savimbi was getting help from the South African government massively during that period of time, and from Morocco and Saudi Arabia and Israel. And we, frankly, don't know, and may never know, whether the United States was or was not encouraging those countries to help Savimbi.

When he came to the States in 1981, he did meet with Secretary of State Al Haig and was given encouragement. So I would be suspicious that there was at least some coaxing and encouraging of those countries to help him.

NNANDI: Before we talk about the proposals for covert



and overt aid that are now in the air, so to speak, let's talk a little more about the South African connection. You mentioned that when it was being discussed at the CIA, that the phrase "irrational" was used to describe the way African leaders and blacks in this country viewed South Africa. You might want to tell us a little more about that.

STOCKWELL: Yes. My position in this thing -- mind you, I had come out of Vietnam, a great debacle, a great scandal, about which I'm currently writing a book of April of '75, thoroughly disillusioned with the integrity of the CIA and its commanders. So I went into this program with considerable skepticism and I raised questions throughout. But I wanted to see it through to the end to see what really happened. So I didn't raise questions and press them to the point where I was fired.

But I did point out to them -- I was arguing against involvement with South Africa. And my boss, this Jim Potts, who'd served his entire career in Europe and had had two two-week-long whirlwind tours of Africa, he finally had the light bulb go off and he understood, and he concluded that what I was saying was that blacks are irrational on the subject of South Africa. And so he sent a cable out to all the field stations saying just that: Remember, in your dealings with the Angolan program, that blacks are irrational on the subject of South Africa. So be careful what you say about our involvement with South Africa.

NNANDI: You grew up in Zaire. How come?

STOCKWELL: My dad was an engineer. Right after World War II, he took off from a chemical plant he had worked for and went to build a hydroelectric plant for the Presbyterian Church. And then he stayed on to build other things. And I grew up, actually, near the border between Zaire and Angola.

NNANDI: Was that an influence in your being selected to be the chief of the Angola task force, or was it really your experience as a Marine and your experience in Vietnam, or a combination of all of them?

STOCKWELL: Well, it was all of those. I was hired into the -- the Marine Corps had put me into reconnaissance because of my African background. The CIA hired me because of both. I'd been assigned to Lubumbashi in Zaire at one time because I had an expertise there.

NNANDI: Okay. Let's take a telephone call.

You're on Evening Exchange.

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MAN: I'm trying to find out -- Mr. Stockwell said that he found Savimbi to be a very trustworthy person, in terms of his reports being true. What I'd like to know is, that at the same time that Savimbi was probably giving him reports, as a CIA officer, he was also telling the world that he controlled that part of Angola, that he had a great number of guerrillas in the field, and that he had a social service network.

So, does Mr. Stockwell feel that he was being told the truth because he was a CIA representative, and that Savimbi was telling the world something different because of other reasons?

And one last part. Does he know of any connection between Savimbi and the Portugese secret police, as has been alleged...

NNANDI: Thank you.

STOCKWELL: Sure. Savimbi, at that time, when he was talking to me in Servoporto and we drove around for several days together, everything he said checked out to the best I could check it out. However, he was making some public statements that somewhat exaggerated his activity in Angola at that time.

But whatever the truth was then, after ten years of association with the CIA, he has certainly learned how to lie. Now he comes to the States and he's trotted around and he's told what to say, and he's gotten quite good at it.

I'll give you one example. When he was here in 1981, someone asked him about John Stockwell. And he said he didn't know any such person. So they showed him a picture of the two of us together. And he said, "Oh. I thought that was some missionary working in Central Angola at the time." Just for one example.

NNANDI: How about the [unintelligible]?

STOCKWELL: The letters are published in the book Dirty Work II, copies of the letters that have Jonas Savimbi's secretary addressed Portugese commanders coordinating activities between the two. Clearly, for whatever reason, he was cooperating with the Portugese. These letters were found in Portugese military files after the coup and a change of governments in Portugal.

NNANDI: Okay. Now we have before us the White House wants about \$15 million in cover aid for UNITA. And there's a proposal in the House of Representatives for about \$27 million in aid. What do you think the CIA, dealing with the first part, can do with \$15 million in Angola that can make a difference?

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STOCKWELL: Mind you, in my estimation, they are probably already spending that \$15 million. When you do it covertly, you lie about it. I -- reading this thing as carefully as I can, I am virtually certain that the Secretary of State's statements and the White House statements and Chester Crocker's statements in recent weeks are the cover for spending the money.

Savimbi is now spending \$600,000 with a public relations firm over here to sell himself to the American Congress and public. And I would love to know where that money came from. Probably that is CIA money.

With 15 million you can buy communications, plane tickets, political organizational stuff, in addition to what he's already got from the South Africans. You can hire several dozen mercenaries to fight, to help you fight, help you organize and fight for a year or so. With CIA case officers going in to help you organize -- and mind you, they would be in the overhead. They wouldn't be charged to the 15 million -- you can do quite a bit, in terms of his type of fighting, which is terrorist activity, blowing up things and killing people. You can kill a lot of people with \$15 million.

NNANDI: Can you overthrow the MPLA government in Angola with \$15 million?

STOCKWELL: No way. Not under the wildest imagination will Savimbi have a chance of overthrowing the government in Luanda without a major intervention from this country or a gigantic commitment by South Africa and the South African army.

NNANDI: How are the Cubans likely to respond to that kind of commitment, either from the U.S. or from South Africa?

STOCKWELL: Without any question, we go in and start killing more people -- mind you, lots of Angolans have been dying for the past 10 years, and before that, because of Savimbi's activities and South African army activities. We go in and arm Savimbi and up the level of violence, this is going to make the Cubans want to leave.

The Angolan government pays several hundred million dollars a year to Cuba for the maintenance of its army there. They would love nothing better than to be able to spend that money on rebuilding the country. If we want peace in Angola, the only logical thing to do is to exchange embassies in Luanda and go in with aid ourselves. Then there'll be -- and for South Africa to get out. Then there'll be no need for the Cubans there, and they'll go home.

NNANDI: One final question. This -- both proposals are

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occurring at a time of very high American consciousness about the situation in South Africa. That, at least, is different from the situation 11 years ago. Do you think that what you describe as the political blunder that Mr. Savimbi made in Africa is also a political blunder here?

STOCKWELL: It certainly is with most of the American people, without any question. South Africa, apartheid is bankrupt. It's coming apart.

It's appalling that anyone in our government would consider going in and having our paramilitary people working shoulder-to-shoulder with the South African army, anywhere. I hope and pray the American people will see this and force our legislators to get their heads straight and not to consider it any further, and not to idolize this man who's betrayed the activities and aspirations and ideals of Third World people all over the world by allying himself with Pieter Botha and South Africa.

NNANDI: ...John Stockwell, former chief of the CIA Angola task force, thank you very much for joining us.